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ABSTRACT

In February 2000, the National Center for Homeless Education convened 25 experts to examine issues pertaining to the transportation of homeless students in a move to ensure their access to education. In a variety of presentations and discussions, participants examined and analyzed the complex issues surrounding transporting homeless students. The meeting addressed the following issues: barriers to transportation for homeless students and why the barriers exist; features of successful approaches to addressing the transportation needs of homeless students; what school districts and communities need to know and be able to do to address these transportation issues and how they can build their capacity to address the issue; how policies and legislation can support school districts and communities in their efforts to provide transportation for homeless children and youth; and what needs to be done. This report discusses what each person can do, and presents issues for further research. Five appendixes include: an issue brief; the 1994 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act; the federal definition of homeless children and youth and the U.S. Department of Education's 1995 preliminary guidance; the symposium agenda; and the symposium participant list. (SM)

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National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth

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National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth

Proceedings
February 20-21, 2000
Williamsburg, Virginia

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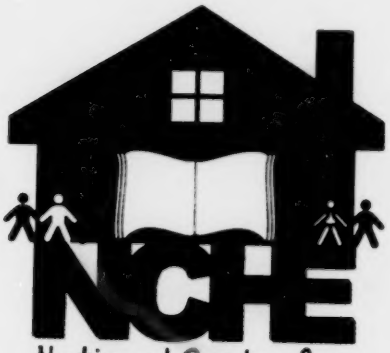

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About NCHE

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is a national resource center of research and information enabling communities to successfully address the needs of homeless children and youth and their families.

The goals of NCHE include the following:

- Disseminate important resource and referral information related to the complex issues surrounding the education of homeless children, youth, and their families
- Provide rapid-response referral information
- Foster collaboration among various organizations with interests in addressing the education of homeless children and youth
- Synthesize and apply existing research and guide the research agenda to expand the knowledge base on the education of homeless children, youth, and their families

The National Center for Homeless Education is housed at SERVE, a consortium of education organizations associated with the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, NCHE provides services to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for homeless children and youth in our nation's school communities.

To find out more about or access the services of NCHE,

visit the website at

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- Symposium participants who developed presentations for the meeting, as well as those participants who gave their time and expertise in surfacing and examining critical issues related to the transportation of homeless children and youth

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Executive Summary

In mid-February 2000, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) convened 25 individuals to examine issues around the transportation of homeless children and youth in a move to ensure their access to educational opportunities. Participants in this national symposium represented state departments of education, school districts, the homeless education research community, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, and national homeless advocacy organizations. Each participant was invited because of his or her expertise in the area of homeless education and interest in the transportation needs of homeless children and youth.

In a variety of presentations and discussions, symposium participants examined and analyzed the complex issues surrounding transporting homeless children and youth. The meeting addressed the following questions:

1. What are the barriers to transportation for homeless students, and why do the barriers exist?
2. What are the features of successful approaches to addressing the transportation needs of homeless children and youth?
3. What do school districts and communities need to know and be able to do to address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth, and how can they build their capacity to address the issue?
4. How can policies and legislation support school districts and communities in their efforts to provide transportation for homeless children and youth?
5. What needs to be done?

After a day and a half of interaction, the symposium participants generated a wealth of information. Some of the barriers to addressing the transportation needs of homeless children and youth they identified included lack of awareness of homelessness, lack of consistency in enforcement of legislation to support the education of homeless children and youth, limited resources, and lack of communication within a school district and across districts.

In spite of these formidable barriers, some school districts are able to address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth effectively. A series of presentations during the symposium on successful efforts of school districts to transport homeless students illustrated that through persistence and creativity, districts can find ways to get homeless children and youth to school and to before- and after-school activities.

Participants discussed what school districts need to know and be able to do to build their capacity to address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth. Suggestions included establishing a community-based focus on educating homeless children and youth, standardizing rules and regulations across districts, and collaborating across programs and agencies. The group also reinforced the importance of collecting data on the numbers of homeless children and youth and on the impact on achievement of those who remain in their school of origin and attend school regularly.

To support school districts and communities in their efforts to provide transportation for homeless children and youth, the group recommended strengthening federal and state legislation, increasing accountability for compliance, eliminating conflicting laws and policies, and increasing funding to support the legislation. The symposium participants also recommended establishing and maintaining strong connections among local and state legislators and those serving homeless children and youth in school districts to increase awareness of the issues on the policymaking level.

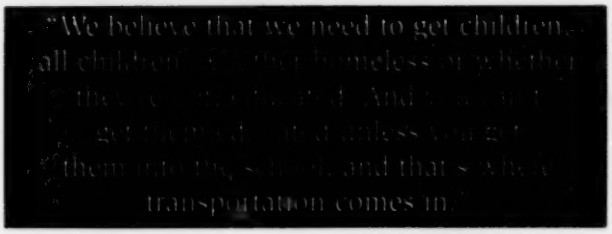
The symposium proceedings that follow capture the discussions that took place during the meeting. The information provides a detailed overview that can increase the awareness of the issue of transportation of homeless children and youth on many different levels. It also provides recommendations and ideas that should be considered by all districts addressing the challenges of providing transportation for homeless children and youth.

The proceedings should be shared with legislators, policymakers, and funding agencies to encourage them to support issues surrounding the education of homeless children and youth. The proceedings can serve as the foundation for conversations among the many players who need to collaborate on providing transportation for homeless children and youth. School district homeless liaisons, pupil transportation directors, and service providers will find these proceedings useful as they seek ways to develop or improve their district's approach to addressing transportation needs of homeless students.

The symposium was an important event, bringing together a range of viewpoints and experiences to provide ideas, recommendations, and strategies for ways in which school districts and communities can provide transportation for homeless children and youth. Many ideas centered on the issue of transportation, but even more critical, the discussions that took place showed the many linkages of this issue to homelessness in general, legislative and policy issues, and collaboration across programs.

Transportation for homeless children and youth is not an isolated issue that requires a patchwork approach to solutions. Transportation must be addressed in an institutionalized fashion that takes into consideration all the players and resources in a school district or community. Educators, service providers, and policymakers need to share responsibility for ensuring that homeless children and youth have access to educational opportunities, viewing transportation as a critical component in a systemic approach to addressing the needs of homeless children and youth.

Overview of the Issue of Providing Transportation to Homeless Children and Youth



A report released in late 1999 by Andrew Cuomo, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, estimated that about 1.35 million children in the United States, nearly two percent of the total number of children and nearly ten percent of poor children, are likely to experience at least one episode of homelessness over a year. This figure is conservative since not all families disclose homelessness, and families who are "doubled-up" (two or more families living in the same dwelling) are not always represented in counts of homelessness.

The lives of homeless children and youth tend to be fragmented and chaotic, and school can be a source of stability, a haven of emotional and social support, and a means to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. School attendance is one of the most critical issues in the lives of children and youth in homeless families.

A recent U.S. Department of Education report compiled from data submitted by state departments of education indicated that in 1998, 12 percent of homeless children and youth (K-12) did not attend school during their homelessness, and 79 percent of preschool homeless children were not enrolled in preschool programs. Additionally, 45 percent of homeless children and youth (K-12) did not attend school on a regular basis. Although the percentage of homeless children and youth not attending school has decreased dramatically since the passage of the McKinney legislation, much improvement needs to take place to ensure that all attendance barriers are eliminated for homeless children and youth.

The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B-VII) requires states and schools to eliminate barriers for homeless children and youth, and several of the provisions of the act specifically address transportation. According to the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B-VII)

- States and school districts must review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth, including transportation barriers.
- School districts must provide homeless children and youth with services comparable to those offered to other students, including transportation services.
- McKinney funds may be used to pay the excess cost of transportation for homeless children and youth not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local sources, when necessary to enable students to attend the school selected to be in their best interest.

Still, transportation for children and youth in homeless situations remains one of the most significant barriers to educational opportunities for these extremely at-risk students. Results from a national survey of 2,000 families experiencing homelessness and poverty show that one quarter of the parents had problems enrolling or keeping their children in school once they became homeless. Half of these parents (48 percent) reported lack of transportation as a barrier they encountered to enrolling their children (*Homes for the Homeless and the Institute for Children and Poverty, 1999, 14*).

Homeless students encounter problems gaining access to transportation services in the following three basic areas:

1. Transportation to any school: Children and youth in homeless situations staying in shelters not on regular school bus routes are frequently unable to attend school unless the district transportation system, shelter staff, or parents can make arrangements for getting the children and youth to school. However, approximately two-thirds of homeless families do not stay in shelters. Homeless children and youth staying doubled-up with friends or relatives, in hotels or motels, in campgrounds, or in other places not on existing school bus routes face even greater barriers in getting to school. The problem is further compounded in rural communities and for those with no public transportation system.

2. Transportation to the school of origin: The lives of homeless children and youth tend to be fragmented and filled with uncertainty. When students are not able to remain in their school of origin after a move, they have the additional stress of trying to establish a new circle of friends or of trying to integrate past studies into a new classroom situation. According to findings reported in *Homes for the Homeless and the Institute of Children and Poverty*,

> Researchers estimate that it takes a child four to six months to recover academically from a school transfer. Homeless children who transfer are 35 percent more likely to repeat a grade and are 78 percent more likely to have poor attendance than those who do not transfer at all. Such transfers can also stand in the way of special education placements—multiple moves leave little time for assessment, making homeless children less likely to receive special services they may need. (12)

"One child, one school, one year," the goal of the homeless transportation program in the Victoria (Texas) Independent School District, is a critical condition for achievement in school. With this goal, a child benefits from instructional and social consistency, particularly necessary for a homeless child whose life may be unstable outside of school. Although the intent of the McKinney legislation is to enable a child or youth in a homeless situation to remain in his or her school of origin whenever feasible, many school districts are unable or unwilling to provide transportation that exceeds the boundaries of the regular bus routes, particularly for a child or youth whose school of origin is in another district.

3. Transportation to before- and after-school activities: The value of before- and after-school programs has been increasingly recognized and supported, most recently by the U.S. Department of Education's 21st-Century Challenge grants. Before- and after-school programs afford children and youth a safe and enriching environment where they can get extra emotional, social, and academic support. These features are particularly important to students coming from impoverished backgrounds. The McKinney legislation requires that homeless children and youth have access to extracurricular activities equal to that of their housed peers. However, lack of transportation frequently excludes students from these activities.

Meeting the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth provides the following explanation for why transportation is so difficult to arrange:

> Providing adequate transportation to and from school for homeless children and youth can be complicated and expensive for several reasons. First, if a shelter is not located on a regular bus route, the children and youth residing there may have to pay for public transportation. If none is available or the cost is prohibitive, homeless children and youth may not be able to attend school. Second, recognizing the value of a stable school experience when everything else is in transition, many families forced to move to

shelters nevertheless may want to keep children and youth in their regular school. The amended McKinney Act emphasized maintaining the child in the school of origin and complying, to the extent feasible, with a parent or guardian's preference concerning school placement. However, when the shelter and the school of origin are in different districts, it is often unclear which district, if either, has the responsibility to pay the transportation costs. This occurs, typically, because districts have not established procedures for transportation across district lines. Unfortunately, homeless students miss school while jurisdictional issues are being debated or while transportation passes are being processed or issued (14-15).

School districts, already pinched for resources, struggle to provide additional services for special-needs students who, in most cases, require a labor-intensive approach and low pupil-per-driver ratio. Additionally, confusion over policies and legislation and cross-district jurisdictional issues result in many homeless children and youth being unable to attend school. The provisions in the McKinney Act relating to transportation still advocate an unattained ideal, rather than a serviceable reality for many school districts and communities.

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Hightower, A. M., S. P. Nathanson, and G. L. Wimberly, "Meeting the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth: A Resource for Schools and Communities." Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1997.

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Federal Regulations

The U.S. Department of Education and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have developed key legislation relating to the transportation of homeless children and youth. The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and Title I of the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act provide for direct services to homeless children and youth, including transportation. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) contains legislation requiring that transportation be provided to students with disabilities (housed and non-housed) to and from school and between schools including to any activities in which all students are participating. Standards and guidelines of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are designed to enforce safe school transportation policies and practices for all children, including homeless children and youth.

According to the Stewart B. McKinney Act, Section 100(1)(1)(2), a child or youth includes "those persons who, if they were children of residents of the state, would be entitled to a free public education." A child or youth is considered to be homeless if he/she lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Section 100[1][1][2]). Appendix C provides further guidance on which children or youth should be considered homeless.

Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle VII-B), passed in 1987 and reauthorized in 1994 in the U.S. Department of Education Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was designed to be a "door opener" to eliminate barriers homeless children and youth face in their educational endeavors. The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B of Title VII, Sec. 323 and Sec. 721) states that

> Each state educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth...in any state that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the state's compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth, the state will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youth are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youth.

As the McKinney Act clearly indicates, homeless students have the right to the same free and appropriate education as other children and youth. However, transportation often acts as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth. Because of their transience or because they often move out of their original school district, homeless children and youth frequently are unable to procure a steady, reliable means of transportation to school. States are required to review and revise all policies, practices, and laws including transportation barriers that stand in the way of a homeless child or youth receiving the same free, appropriate education as other children and youth. In regard to the state's education plan, the McKinney Act [Sec. 323, Sec. 722, (g)(1) and (g)(1)(F)(i)] says

> Each state shall submit to the Secretary a plan to provide for the education of homeless children and youth within the state, which plan shall

> describe how such children and youth are or will be given the opportunity to meet the same challenging state student performance standards all students are expected to meet, shall describe the procedures the state educational agency will use to identify such children and youth in the state and to assess their special needs and shall...address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youth, including problems caused by transportation issues....

Further, local educational agencies must work in the child's or youth's best interest to maintain him or her in his or her school of origin "for the remainder of the academic year; or in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years, for the following academic year." [Sec. 323, Sec. 722 (g)(3)(A)(i)(ii)] These children and youth will also be provided comparable services offered to other students in the school "including transportation services" [Sec. 323, Sec. 722, (g)(4)(A)].

> Each state educational agency and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth in schools.... In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records, and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youth who are not currently attending school. [Sec. 323, Sec. 722, (g)(8)]

These laws apply broadly to all state and local educational agencies (LEAs).

The McKinney Act also specifically addresses LEAs that are receiving McKinney grant funding. Under Sec. 323 and Sec. 723, (d)(5) of the Act,

> A local educational agency may use funds awarded under this section for activities to carry out the purpose of this subtitle, including...the provision of assistance to defray the excess cost of transportation for students pursuant to section 722(g)(4), not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding, where necessary to enable students to attend the school selected under section 722(g)(3).

In summary, states and LEAs are required by law to have a plan to remove barriers to the education of homeless children and youth, including any transportation barriers. Any local educational agencies receiving McKinney grant funds may use this money to assist in defraying the costs of transporting homeless children and youth to their school of origin.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

All homeless children and youth, including preschool-age children, are automatically eligible to receive Title I services, regardless of whether or not they attend Title I participating schools. Section 1115 (b) (2) (D) of Title I Part A, which addresses targeted assistance schools, states, "A child who is homeless and attending any school in the local education agency may be eligible for services under this part." Homeless children are eligible for services if they are attending a Title I targeted assistance school or a schoolwide program school or even if they are attending a school not eligible to receive Title I funds. Homeless children may receive educational and/or support services through Title I, and services may be delivered in schools and shelters or other facilities outside of school.

"Schoolwide programs" (defined in Section 1114) are entitled by law to use their Title I funds to serve all students in their buildings. In schoolwides that have a large homeless population or students with high mobility, the school should address the needs of these children and youth by implementing strategies that would provide educational stability. Transportation for homeless children and youth to attend the school would be a critical means of providing stability.

Section 1113 states,

> A local education agency shall reserve such funds as are necessary under this part to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools funded under this part to serve where appropriate, eligible homeless

children who do not attend participating schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelter....

According to Section 1113, districts with significant homeless populations are required to set aside funds to provide them the same educational opportunities as other students, even when activities take place in sites other than Title I participating schools. Set-aside funds can serve homeless children and youth who attend schools that are not schoolwide or targeted assistance schools, and these funds can provide services in non-school environments such as shelters.

Excerpts of the Title I legislation listed above clearly indicate that Title I funds are to be used to serve homeless children. Title I Part A supports and promotes the concept of keeping students at their school of origin when they become homeless during the school year, and, therefore, Title I funds can be spent on their transportation needs. Other conventional uses of Title I funding include activities such as providing academic support, purchasing materials and supplies, counseling, training for site personnel, and increasing parent involvement.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA requires that children with disabilities (who meet the federal definition) receive special education and related services to meet their unique educational needs. Although IDEA has always covered children who are homeless, the act was amended in 1997, and the final regulations issued in March 1999 specifically mention children who are homeless for the first time [34C.F.R.§300.125(1999)]. IDEA of 1997 is the fifth set of amendments (since 1965) to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, better known as EHA or Public Law 94-142. The current legislation has six primary guidelines to ensure students with special education needs: a free, appropriate public education (FAPE); appropriate evaluation; individualized education program; least restrictive environment; parent and student involvement in decision making; and procedural safeguards.

Another IDEA guideline under "related services" includes specific provision for the transportation of students with disabilities. "Transportation" includes travel to and from school and between schools, travel in and around campus, and special equipment required to assist a student with transportation. In school districts, transportation services are provided for students with disabilities on regular school buses or special education buses. Unfortunately, unless transportation needs are listed in a student's IEP, services are not provided (e.g., transportation to childcare). Transportation is provided only when the school system is transporting "regular" students. However, since transportation is written into the IEP, whether a student is homeless or not, services are made available to him or her. In fact, participants of the National Symposium remarked that program coordinators for students who were homeless could take some "lessons" from special education programs on the issue of transportation.

According to the Annual Report of IDEA, a record of 46 percent of America's six million students with disabilities were educated in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers in 1996-1997, continuing an inclusion trend started nearly a quarter-century ago with IDEA. Further, 46 percent of students with disabilities (3-21 years old) spent at least 80 percent of their time in regular classrooms. This is a significant improvement from the past when students with disabilities were encouraged to attend separate schools or meet in separate classes from their non-disabled peers. Obviously, in order for these changes to take place, students with disabilities had to rely on consistent transportation to receive educational services.

(Note: The Annual Report on Individuals with Disabilities Act is available online at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/OSEP99AnlRpt/)

National Pupil Transportation Guidelines

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Guideline #17, "Pupil Transportation Safety," establishes minimum recommendations for the transportation of students to and from school and school-related activities. These guidelines provide important safeguards for all students, including special needs children such as homeless children and youth. Although the necessity to get homeless children and youth to school frequently drives

decisions on the method of transport, educators and service providers are urged to take responsibility to ensure that the transportation of homeless children and youth to school is equally as safe as the transportation of all other students as regulated by federal guidelines.

Definition of "School"

In looking at the issue of transportation in schools, one first must establish what is defined as a school. For federal purposes, a school is defined as, not only the K-12 traditional school, but also pre-K, Head Start, and daycare. According to federal guidelines, if any of these types of schools uses a vehicle with a capacity of more than ten persons to transport students to and from school or a school-related activity, such a vehicle should be a school bus. A bus, under federal law, is "any motor vehicle designed to carry more than ten persons," and a bus is considered to be a school bus "if it is used, or intended for use, in transporting students to and from school or school-related activities" (*Vans Used for School Transportation*, 1). Many schools elect to purchase or lease vans for the transport of students. However, as discussed below, this method of transportation can be illegal and is strongly discouraged because of safety and liability issues.

Non-Conforming Vehicles

The federal guidelines and laws concerning the use of school buses, rather than vehicles that do not conform to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses, can act as a barrier to programs for homeless children and youth. Many organizations involved in the transportation of homeless children and youth to school may not be able to afford a school bus, or it may be unfeasible because of state or local laws/regulations. As a result, many schools and programs for homeless children and youth have turned to other means of transporting their homeless students, including private vehicles, taxi cabs, public transportation, and/or "nonconforming" vans—that is, vans that do not meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards that apply to school buses.

An important issue regarding these alternate means of transportation is the issue of liability. Under federal law, motor vehicle dealers are prohibited from selling/leasing a new motor vehicle with a capacity of more than 10 people (typically a full-size van) for the purpose of transporting students to and from school or school-related activity unless the vehicle complies with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses (*Vans Used for School Transportation*, 1).

While the letter of the law only applies to new vans, the intent of the law is more widespread. Students are safer in school buses than in other private means of transportation; therefore, use of these various nonconforming vehicles is strongly discouraged. If one of these vehicles were to be involved in an accident, injuring students or other passengers, the liability for those involved would be great. The risk of serious injury or fatality is greatly increased for the occupants of a van than for those of a school bus. And, according to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, "typically, any crash resulting in serious injuries or fatalities to school children results in lawsuits" (*Vans Used for School Transportation*, 2).

Despite the fact that the law does not explicitly state that used vans or other means of transportation are illegal, they would most likely not be considered safe in a liability lawsuit. If at all possible, school personnel are encouraged to purchase school buses to transport the school's homeless children and youth, or, better yet, to reroute the already existing buses to include these students on their bus route. These federal regulations and issues are important factors in planning a successful homeless program.

School Bus Safety Guidelines

Because school buses must comply with 36 Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards—four standards unique only to school buses—they are considered to be among the safest vehicles on the road. In addition, school bus drivers must possess a Commercial Driver's License, and meet the school bus driver requirements established by their state and/or local school district.

According to real-world crash data collected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an average of ten school-age children are killed each

year while a passenger on a school bus. However, more than 600 school-age children are killed each year during "normal school transportation hours" as an occupant of a passenger motor vehicle. ("Normal school transportation hours" are defined as Monday through Friday, September 1, through June 15, 6:00 to 9:00 in the morning and 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon.)

In addition to the design and construction of school buses and the training/licensing required of school bus drivers, another reason for the excellent safety record for school buses is *Guideline #17*. This federal guideline gives states a framework for designing their school bus transportation program. It recommends the color of the buses, the safety features, training of the drivers, passenger conduct, identification and maintenance of the buses, and various other aspects of pupil transportation safety.

Lack of Funds for School Buses

In spite of the school bus's excellent safety record and standards, fewer and fewer students are riding the yellow school bus—approximately 50 percent last year, and that number has gradually decreased over the years. In most states, school transportation funds must compete with other education-related items, such as teacher salaries, computers, textbooks, and school facilities. In many instances, school transportation budgets have decreased, resulting in a reduction in school bus services. The issue is further complicated when homeless children and youth do not make use of the school bus or are not able to use the bus. If homeless children and youth are not transported or are not counted in the number transported, they cannot be included in the costs for transportation. Therefore, it is important for homeless students to begin utilizing the services that exist, and their usage should be documented so that more resources will be available to them in the future.

Guidelines for Pre-School Transportation

Additional guidelines are given for preschool children transported to and from school and school-related activities. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's guideline issued in February 1999, safe transportation for preschool children must include a child safety restraint system (CSRS). The CSRS must be properly secured to the seat and the child must be properly secured in the CSRS. If another child shares the seat, the CSRS should be placed next to the window. Other guidelines are also included regarding evacuation of the school bus and CSRS specifications (*Guidelines for the Safe Transportation of Pre-School Age Children in School Buses*).

Summary

Many federal laws and guidelines exist which impact the transportation of students to and from school or school-related activities. Schools and districts must be aware of these laws and what their responsibilities entail. By working together, schools and federal organizations can help to make transportation safer for all involved and can ensure that all students, including homeless children and youth, have access to the transportation to which they are entitled.

Annotated Bibliography

Guidelines for the Safe Transportation of Pre-School Age Children in School Buses. Washington, D.C.: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1999.

School buses are the safest means of transportation on the highways today, meeting 36 federal motor vehicle safety standards. As the number of preschool children transported daily continues to increase, the question is raised of how to safely transport this new group of students. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), to help answer the question, began crash testing preschool size dummies in school bus seats. The results of these tests reveal that preschool-age children are safest when in child safety restraint systems (CSRS) that meet federal standards and are correctly attached to the school bus seats. This guideline outlines the recommendations for the transportation of preschool-age children in school buses, including the definition of a child safety restraint system, child safety restraint guidelines and specifications, and how to properly install a CSRS in the school bus. The guideline also states how to safely evacuate children from the bus along with other recommendations.

History of School Bus Safety—Why Are School Buses Built as They Are? Dover, DE: National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, 2000.

Beginning with a brief history of school transportation systems, this position paper moves into a discussion of the current state of school bus transportation. The school bus has been revolutionized since its introduction in the 1920s and 30s. After several serious tragedies involving school buses, 48 states met to decide on standards and guidelines for all school buses, nationwide. Presently, 36 Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) are in existence that apply to school buses. The paper outlines many of the federal standards that have unique requirements for school buses and details the four standards that are unique only to school buses. Annual school bus transportation statistics are also given regarding the number of public school buses, how many students have been transported, how many miles traveled, and how many student trips. The paper concludes by reemphasizing the safety of school buses and the continuing efforts to maintain and revise the safety standards, "safeguarding the future generations of America."

Vans Used for School Transportation. Dover, DE: National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, 2000.

This position paper outlines the use of full-size passenger vans (capacity of more than 10 passengers) by schools to transport children and youth to and from school and school-related activities. It begins by outlining the issue—that more and more schools are using these methods of transportation for their students. Because drivers are not required to possess Commercial Driver's Licenses and are not put through the rigorous training and background/drug tests that drivers of school buses are, the paper states that using these vans to transport students could have "potentially dangerous consequences." The paper goes on to discuss the fact that the law prohibits the sale or lease of any new motor vehicle with a capacity for more than 10 people for use in transporting students to and from school and school-related activities. Even though this law does not apply to used vehicles, the paper continues to argue that this is the intent of the law. The law was designed to keep students safer, and school buses alone meet the safety standards for students. These non-conforming vehicles pose a serious liability issue for the owners if the vehicle should ever be involved in an accident involving injury or fatality. The paper continues discussing the liability issue and what to do if one is aware of a violation of this law. The final section of the paper states that the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services takes a strong stand on this issue, supporting "the position that school children should be transported in school buses, which provide the highest levels of safety, and not in full-sized vans or minivans, which do not meet the stringent school bus safety standards issued by the federal government." It encourages states to ensure the use of school buses, not vans, by their schools by establishing strict rules on which types of vehicles can and cannot be used to transport students. It concludes by summarizing the Safety Recommendations made by the National Transportation Safety Board in June 1999.

Highway Safety Program Guideline #17 Pupil Transportation Safety. Washington, D.C.: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1992.

This guideline "establishes minimum recommendations for a state highway safety program for pupil transportation safety including the identification, operation, and maintenance of buses used for carrying students; training of passengers, pedestrians, and bicycle riders; and administration."

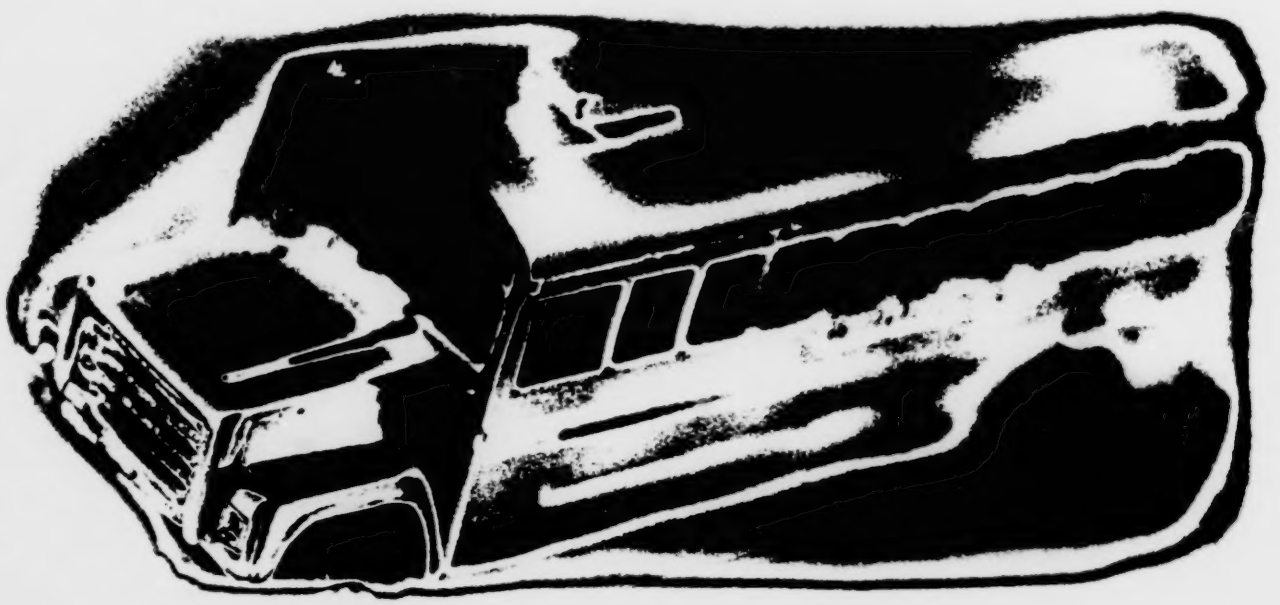
The purpose of the guideline is "to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the danger of death or injury to school children while they are traveling to and from school and school-related events."

The guideline outlines the definitions of "bus," "Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR)," "School-chartered bus," and "school bus." It then describes the Pupil Transportation

Safety Program administration and operations. This section details what the administration of the Program will entail and then discusses the identification of and equipment on school buses, detailing paint color, lettering on the sides of the bus, safety equipment, etc. It also outlines which procedures should be followed to ensure proper operation of school buses and school-chartered buses, including the state plan for selecting, training, and supervising drivers, as well as the requirements the driver must meet (driver's license, drug test, etc.). It then addresses the stopping procedures for the school buses; the increased safety of other highway users, pedestrians, bicycle riders, and property; and proper seating on the buses. Finally, it details what maintenance needs to occur regularly to ensure proper operation and highlights various aspects of pupil transportation safety.

Documents from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are available on the agency's website at
www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Documents from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services are available on the association's website at
www.nasdpts.org.



Barriers to Providing Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth

Participants in the National Symposium identified many barriers to providing transportation for homeless children and youth. These barriers are compiled and summarized in the following six categories.

Lack of Awareness

Many school districts do not have a systematic way of identifying homeless families and tracking them as they move from one location to another. Frequency of mobility, particularly for families who stay in emergency or transitional shelters and for families who stay in shelters with policies on limited lengths of residence, contributes to the difficulty in keeping up with transportation arrangements. Additionally, much confusion exists over the federal definition of homeless children and youth. Many people are unaware the federal definition includes children and youth living in doubled up families, runaways, and throwaways as homeless. (See Appendix C.) Also, many homeless parents and homeless students, especially those in middle school and high school, are reluctant to disclose their homelessness. As a result, many school districts are either unaware that homeless students exist or may be aware that they exist but are unable to identify them before their school attendance is disrupted.

Confusion over Legislation

Many educators and shelter providers are not aware of the McKinney legislation or of the provisions of Title I that address the needs of homeless children and youth. For those who are aware of the legislation, confusion exists over the interpretation. Phrases in the McKinney Act such as "school of origin" and "comparable services" are problematic terms as they relate to the transportation rights of homeless children and youth. Some school districts refuse to comply with the McKinney legislation, but litigation is a costly solution in terms of funding and in terms of creating a spirit of cooperation within the district. The "when feasible" caveat relating to the portion of the legislation that addresses keeping a homeless child or youth in his school of origin in many cases serves as a loophole for districts to avoid transporting a homeless child or youth beyond the school closest to where he or she is staying. The question of which district pays for transportation becomes an issue when a child or youth needs to be transported across district lines to attend his school of origin. Regarding Title I, many educators, administrators, and service providers are unaware that Title I funds can be used to pay for services, including transportation, for homeless children and youth who are by law Title I students.

Limited Funding and Resources

Homelessness does not garner nearly enough attention as a persistent and devastating social issue. Funds to address any aspect of the issue, including education for homeless children and youth, are limited. Though McKinney funds allocated to school districts are designed to support services for homeless children and youth, these funds are insufficient to address all their multiple and varied needs. More disconcerting, however, is the fact that approximately only four percent of the school districts nationwide receive McKinney funds. School districts, constantly dealing with budget cuts, are stretched to the limit in providing adequate transportation systemwide and have difficulty in addressing the transportation needs of special populations that require additional personnel, vehicles, or routes.

Many school districts do not have thorough documentation on the numbers of homeless students who need transportation; therefore, they are not able to

make a case on the local, state, or federal level for more funding. School districts in areas with no public transportation have fewer alternatives outside of the school system for transporting homeless children and youth than districts that can utilize public buses or cab services.

Policy Barriers

Many districts and states have conflicting and inflexible policies. For example, the McKinney requirement that homeless children and youth should attend their school of origin when feasible may conflict with a policy that limits the amount of time a child may ride on the bus. Or conflicting starting and ending times of schools may make coordinating special school bus arrangements difficult. In addition, the solution of using alternative forms of transportation outside of the school system may conflict with laws and policies relating to the safety of and liability for transporting students. Most states and districts have not conducted policy reviews to identify and resolve conflicting policies.

Lack of Communication

The lack of communication among schools and shelters, homeless families and schools, schools and district school transportation directors, district homeless liaisons and schools or transportation directors, schools and service providers, or between two school districts can result in a lack of shared responsibility for homeless children and youth and the lack of synergy that comes from collaborative problem-solving. Often one party needs to be sensitized to the needs of homeless children and youth, and the resulting awareness can be the foundation for collaboration. Relationship building is key to developing a collective sense of responsibility.

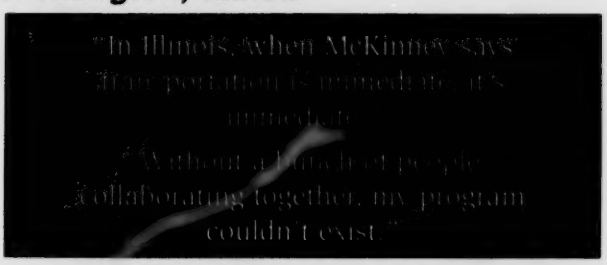
Apathy

Homelessness is not an issue of national concern and this apathy is reflected in the lack of support for issues surrounding homelessness and homeless children on the state and community level. Beyond the fact that many educators are unaware that homeless children and youth exist in their district, a persistent attitude exists that homeless children and youth should attend the school nearest where they are staying. These educators do not understand the importance—academically, socially, and emotionally—of homeless children and youth attending their school of origin. School personnel, who are frequently the "gatekeepers" for enrollment and for addressing transportation needs, may lack sensitivity to the devastation and chaos in the lives of homeless children and youth and are not vested in making decisions (including those related to transportation) that would provide the children with a measure of stability and continuity in their lives.

Descriptions of Successful Programs Providing Transportation to Homeless Children and Youth

Faced with many barriers and regulations, schools and communities must work hard to create a successful system for handling the transportation issue. Highlighted at the National Symposium were six school districts across the country that have implemented successful transportation programs for their homeless children and youth. (One must keep in mind, however, that "successful" programs address the unique features of their communities and are not necessarily generalizable for all districts.)

Bloomington, Illinois



School districts in Illinois have the benefit of strong legislation that mirrors and supports the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The state law is very specific regarding the issue of transportation; as a result, fewer problems arise over interpretation.

The Bloomington school district exists in a dichotomy: located in a rural area, it also finds itself in a very affluent area. Several large corporations make their home in this district, which has a positive impact on the economy, yet the area also has a large homeless population. The district has access to a limited public transportation system, but community agencies help to address the needs of homeless children and youth.

The transportation program that the school district has relied on since 1992 is funded in part through a McKinney grant and supported by funds solicited by the McKinney program coordinator from private organizations and local corporations. Also, community agencies conduct fundraisers.

The district homeless liaison works closely with the pupil transportation director. In cases where the arrangement of transportation takes a few days, the McKinney program coordinator or a volunteer provides transportation for up to three days. The Illinois Community Action Association (ICAA) provides van transport for children for this time period. Taxicabs and the public buses are used as a last resort, but are frequently needed when families are staying in hotels or motels. In these instances, children are issued bus passes. Immediate transportation is provided to homeless students either by altering existing bus routes or by a special van.

The district homeless liaison works closely with parents to get the children and youth to an appropriate bus stop to ensure confidentiality of their homelessness. The high turnover among bus drivers necessitates ongoing staff development to ensure that homeless students are treated with sensitivity.

The ICAA has initiated the CARS Program in which cars are donated and given to the working homeless. This program allows parents to drive their children to school or before- and after-school programs when needed, and the parents are reimbursed for gas.

The number of homeless children and youth served by the school district has tripled over the last year to 190. The school district's transportation program has had a significant impact on student attendance. Additionally, parents can concentrate on other issues rather than having to arrange for transportation for their child.

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Victoria, Texas*

Victoria is a rural area with no public transportation system. The Victoria Independent School District (VISD) provides bus service for the schools in the catchment area. VISD implemented a "One Child, One School, One Year" program in 1995. The policy was originally intended for homeless children and youth but later expanded to include all students. McKinney grant funds pay for any bus service per mile when an additional route is added. Every effort is made to keep students in their school of origin and to use existing routes. In some cases children meet at a "bus barn" on an existing route to be picked up.

McKinney program funds are also used to provide transportation to another program called "Project 59." Homeless students living in motels on a local highway (Highway 59) are provided transportation to and from school and in the afternoons to a homework center before returning the students to their places of residence. Transportation is arranged through school-parent liaisons (teachers funded by Title I) and the school district transportation department. The VISD McKinney program provides transportation to all students, even those within the two-mile radius zone of the school.

As a result of these programs, VISD reported that school attendance improved by 63,430 days, and 604 fewer students had 10-19 absences. Benefits of greater attendance include an increase of $1,800,000 in state education funds to the district and improvement on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills scores in one elementary school with a significant number of homeless students. In 1999, $26,000 was spent on transportation, and 820 children and youth were served (including 70 homeless students in the Project 59 program). In addition, the McKinney liaison was able to assist all of the families in Project 59 in finding permanent housing.

— (The representative from the Victoria Independent School District was unable to attend the National Symposium; however, the school district was included in the symposium discussions.)

Washoe County, Reno, Nevada

"You find a way—you just go and get them."

Washoe County School District (WCSD) serves 55,000 students. Washoe County, with a population of 250,000, is primarily rural except for the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area and has a city public transportation system. WCSD is a unified district, which makes communication between schools and principals easier and more efficient.

The district uses special education buses to transport homeless students to school. In most cases, students can remain in their school of origin. When possible, homeless students ride a regular bus, which gives them a sense of normalcy. The bus drivers, dispatchers, and others help to reduce stigmatization of students by calling new stops for homeless students "special stops." Every effort is made to maintain the confidentiality of the student's homelessness and to provide transportation to those in need.

City bus passes are provided to some students who would prefer this mode of transportation or who are unable to ride either the special education or regular buses. Middle and high school students who do not want to be identified as homeless often prefer public transportation. The school district gives these students bus tickets for the public transportation system instead of rerouting school buses to pick them up.

The district transportation director attributes the success of the WCSD program to several features. First, the transportation of homeless children and youth fits into the existing transportation system. The services to homeless students have grown gradually over the last ten years. Also, the transportation system works because of communication and collaboration among the district homeless liaison, the Homeless Youth Advocate, and other district staff. A high degree of cooperation from site personnel, such as secretaries, and from the dispatcher, who has a personal connection to homelessness in his family, ensures that the needs of homeless children and youth are addressed with expediency and empathy. An efficient tracking system also ensures that the children's needs are addressed with minimal disruption to their education.

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One barrier that WCSD does not face is that of transporting students across district lines. Because Washoe County is so large, problems of keeping students within the district and even within their school of origin are minimal.

The WCSD program to transport homeless children is funded by the district, not McKinney dollars. Two years ago, there were an estimated 829 homeless children and youth, of which more than 200 were served by the WCSD. Fewer than 100 homeless children and youth are now being served in the schools. This decrease in numbers may be due in part to the economy—perhaps fewer families are becoming homeless—or to the highly transient population in the Reno/Sparks area.

Cincinnati, Ohio

Located in an urban area with a public transportation system, the Cincinnati Public School District (CPSD) is another district that has successfully eliminated many transportation barriers for homeless children and youth in their schools. Their McKinney homeless project, Project CONNECT, is the "gatekeeper" and advocate for homeless children and youth, but the success of the program derives from cooperation among various agencies in the school district, including legal counsel, pupil transportation services, and federal compensatory programs. Cooperation between shelters and schools is also critical. The result of extensive cooperation and collaboration is that many people take responsibility for meeting the needs of homeless children and youth. The program also has an efficient tracking system to ensure continuity of education for homeless children and youth as families move from shelter to shelter. The program also conducts community awareness activities. An AmeriCorp VISTA worker coordinated a benefit one summer that heightened awareness and resulted in the donations of funds for the purchase of a bus.

Project CONNECT relies on several different transportation options for the growing population of homeless students in their area. A McKinney liaison will try to re-route a bus to pick up a student who has become homeless; however, given distances and existing routes, re-routing is not always possible. The next option is to provide bus cards for children at $30.00 per school quarter (bus cards for parents are also provided for students younger than grade six). Negative aspects to providing bus cards are the cost and the time it takes to replace bus cards when they are lost. An alternative is to provide parents and children with discounted bus tokens, which are readily available and can be reissued immediately ($32.50 for a roll of 50 tokens—parents pay 15 cents per token). Parents and children must sign out tokens at the shelter or school to keep track of the number used. Since the number of homeless people in the CPSD area is increasing, taxicabs also are used as a means of transportation of homeless students who live in motels.

The CPSD McKinney program estimated serving nearly 2,000 children and youth in the last year, all using the different transportation options mentioned above. The district reported spending $1,500 on bus tokens and $900 on bus cards; $8,000 total was spent, including transportation during a summer program. The district prides itself on educating the schools about parental rights and educating parents about their options.

Some of the struggles the program faces in overcoming the barriers to transportation are busing students from outlying districts and increasing the awareness and acceptance of homeless children and youth in the district. Additionally, local policy and state legislation are weak in support of homeless children and youth, so the federal legislation is the only source of legal guidance.

The two sub-groups of homeless children and youth that have presented the biggest challenge in terms of transportation have been preschool children and children living in families in doubled-up situations, because they are more difficult to identify and harder for the district to accept as homeless. The district gives bus tokens and provides taxicab services to these children (and the parents of preschool children). In spite of many barriers and obstacles, Project CONNECT manages to work with the community to establish effective transportation strategies for homeless children and youth.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) operates in an urban area with a public transportation system. However, FWCS does not rely on the community's public transportation system to bus its students. Transportation of all students, including homeless students, is provided by and budgeted through FWCS in a program implemented in 1991. Although FWCS receives McKinney grant funds, these funds are used for tutorial programs and not for transportation. The salaries of the employees of the homeless program are paid by the school system, rather than by McKinney funds.

One of the most notable features of the FWCS program is a central point of contact from which all identification of homeless children and youth and coordination of services occur. When children or youth become homeless, the district homeless liaison arranges transportation through student services and the transportation department. Close communication with the dispatch department facilitates this coordination. Buses are then re-routed so that the child or youth will remain in his or her school of origin. The new stops are incorporated into the existing route in such a way that the students are not stigmatized by being picked up at the shelter.

FWCS serves more than 300 homeless students per year. The burden and stress of arranging transportation is lifted from the parents of homeless children and youth, freeing them to take advantage of community programs and to focus on other issues.

One large factor in the success of this program has been the support of the superintendent and the school board. In addition, the program involves as many agencies and community members as possible. A Homeless Advisory Board is a critical component in the program. Increasing community awareness is also important to the success of the program.

Vancouver, Washington

"Now is always a good time to explore alternate methods of transportation services. Cooperative services have proven to be a win-win situation that deserves every fiscal officer's and transportation manager's consideration."

The Educational Service District 112 is one of nine statewide regional service agencies that provides various services to six counties, encompassing 30 public school districts, 22 private schools and 100,000 children. ESD 112's Specialized Transportation department established the Rainbow Rider program to provide school bus transportation for kindergarten through high school youth residing in six homeless shelters throughout two counties. More than 100 children annually are bused for periods

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from one day to six months or more between shelters and their school of origin. Continuity and stability of education and support systems in the midst of homelessness is the most important factor in the success of the program. Children and their parents have the assurance of safety, a caring support system, and the stability of their home school and friends as they maintain regular attendance and academic progress.

The Rainbow Riders were incorporated into an existing special education pupil transportation cooperative. ESD 112 operates the only specialized transportation cooperative in the state and was able to build on this service to include homeless youth. Twenty-two school districts pooled resources to purchase 37 buses and transport more than 250 special needs children on a daily basis to education, treatment, and specialized program sites throughout five counties and across the border in Oregon. Initially, the homeless program utilized the same buses with routing adjustments until the program was able to purchase—through grants—its own vehicle, which is maintained in the fleet. Without the cooperative, they would lose critical bus, driver, and routing support.

Some of the struggles the cooperative has experienced are due to the fluctuating levels of federal McKinney funding and donations from private organizations. Because the program is not institutionalized in the school system, if the external funding (including McKinney funds) is not longer available, the program will end. Other challenges are related to tracking students to determine whether transportation has had an effect on academic performance. Student mobility as well as confidentiality issues inhibit accurate recording of academic progress.

Besides the 22 school districts in the cooperative, other major players are the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Homeless Youth Program (McKinney); ESD 112's seven-member, highly supportive Board of Directors; related ESD programs such as transportation co-op, graduation recovery, youth employment, and AmeriCorps/Service Learning; six community shelters—both publicly and privately funded; and collaborative community partners/donors.

State and federal policies and legislation greatly impact the program. A cooperative representative said, "Without legislation from the Washington State Legislature, the regional educational system would not have the authority to operate transportation cooperatives for school districts. Any reduction in the state McKinney funds would greatly impact the receiving districts and programs. Policies that recognize the plight of the homeless population and provide incentives for support services and transitioning back into productivity are critical for the children caught up in these situations."

The impact of the transportation program for ESD 112 has been positive. Without the service, students living in shelters would not be able to continue their education at their school of origin. More transportation resources need to be put in place to provide services to students in campgrounds, cars, or other inadequate living situations besides shelters or "doubled-up" housing. A cooperative representative said the key was growing awareness and support from county and other community agencies that are beginning to understand the complexity of homelessness and where transportation fits into the puzzle.

Features of Successful Programs

After listening to the presentations on transportation systems that address homelessness in specific school districts and drawing from their own experiences, National Symposium participants discussed key features of programs that successfully address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth. The features they identified are discussed below.

Existing Homeless Transportation System

One of the features that played a major role in the success of a transportation program was having an effective transportation system for homeless students in place prior to McKinney funding. Several of the presenters on district programs made comments such as, "We didn't have to reinvent the wheel; it was a gradual process—not like a sledgehammer," and "The administration backed the program from the beginning." On the other hand, there cannot be "one system" or program to transport homeless children. The program must be constantly readjusted to accommodate the mobility of the students.

Institutionalized Support

> "Homeless kids don't ask to be here. I don't think giving them a ride is too much to ask."

Support from decision makers and policymakers is critical to providing services for homeless children. Legislators, superintendents, and school boards need to be part of an ongoing conversation related to the educational needs of homeless children.

Administrators and pupil transportation directors in school districts with effective programs are aware of the need for transportation for homeless students and are willing to adjust bus routes to accommodate transient and highly mobile children and youth. Symposium participants voiced a concern that the administration should be careful not to overlook homeless students' needs to attend before- and after-school programs. Some of the districts represented at the symposium stated that it was important to have transportation of homeless students "built in" to the existing transportation system to ensure that all students would have transportation to school in the event that McKinney or other funding was not available.

Funding

> "Nobody has the money, but it's our job, and it has to be done, so let's figure out a way."

Another feature of successful programs relates to funding. Successful programs presented at the Symposium obtained funding for their transportation programs from several different sources. In addition, these programs used creative and innovative ways to fund transportation services. Some of the programs shared transportation costs among districts. For example, through the cooperative in ESD 112 in Vancouver, Washington, districts pool funding and resources to be able to provide transportation for all homeless students living in shelters. The districts are persistent in asking for funding and support from McKinney programs and private organizations.

Communication and Collaboration

> "I think the community pulling together and collaboration is what makes my program a success."

Collaboration with all stakeholders is a key feature of successful programs. Stakeholders include shelter providers and staff, school district bus dispatchers and drivers, special education transportation personnel, and personnel in other school districts. In districts where transportation programs are in place for homeless children, the homeless liaison and transportation director work closely in a spirit of give-and-take with the commitment to come up with a solution. That personal connection is critical.

Transportation directors also collaborate with community agencies, public transportation systems, teachers, and counselors, as well as the parents of children and youth who are homeless. Shelter staff can play an important role in keeping the lines of communication open with school personnel.

Communication is not only critical for planning ways to address the needs of homeless children and youth, but it is also important in creating awareness of issues related to homelessness in individuals who provide direct services to homeless children and youth only as part of their regular responsibilities.

Committed Staff

Persons assisting homeless children and youth with transportation to school must be sensitive to the issues related to homelessness and feel a sense of responsibility for the students with whom they work. Dispelling the stereotypes of homeless people is imperative. Ongoing staff development and sensitivity training will ensure that staff members understand the importance of reducing stigmatization and remaining flexible in their dealings with transient students.

District homeless liaisons are key players in ensuring ongoing support for providing transportation for homeless children and youth. Their roles include serving as the main point of contact for services relating to serving homeless children and youth, coordinating services across the district, writing grant proposals, conducting awareness and professional development activities, and being persistent advocates for homeless children and youth. In many cases, homeless liaisons in these successful programs advocate in grass roots organizations for students who are homeless. Homeless liaisons, pupil transportation directors, and other administrators and school staff in districts that effectively meet the needs of homeless children and youth are persistent, creative, and entrepreneurial.

District and school personnel are often the first and most critical points of contact for homeless children, youth, and others who need information about working with students who are homeless. They interpret the McKinney Act, providing immediate transportation and enrollment for students who are homeless. Without staff members throughout the school system who are committed to providing transportation for this population of students, these programs would not work.

Issues That Need to Be Addressed by School Districts and Communities

In order for school districts and communities to address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth, they need to develop knowledge and capacity in several areas. Communities should build a foundation for the collective sense of responsibility and collaboration needed to eliminate barriers for homeless children and youth. Symposium participants identified the following activities to build a school district's capacity to transport homeless students.

Increasing Awareness

School districts and communities need to know the issues surrounding homelessness and the educational rights of school-age (birth to 21 years) children and youth. (The definition of "school-age" may vary from state to state. Check with your State Education Association for your state's definition.) Stakeholders, such as legislators, superintendents, school board members, and community leaders, should be contacted on a regular basis and involved in addressing these issues. A community-based focus and commitment to educating homeless children and youth are imperative to eliminating barriers on a systemic level. In addition, stakeholder awareness of the complex issues surrounding the transportation of homeless children and youth is critical. For example, school districts should not overlook the fact that students who are homeless will need transportation to and from extra-curricular activities, after-school programs, and field trips.

School district homeless liaisons should ensure that information relating to the McKinney Act and the educational rights of homeless children and youth, fact sheets, and documents on issues relating to homeless children and youth are disseminated throughout the community. Awareness presentations, public service announcements, posters, and brochures are also useful vehicles for increasing awareness.

In addition, school districts and state coordinators for the education of homeless children and youth program should know where the homeless children and youth in their state are currently residing and going to school, according to Section 722(f)(1-6) of the McKinney Act. This knowledge is paramount to addressing the issue of transportation.

Communities must share the responsibility for increasing awareness on state and federal levels. If legislators and policymakers at these levels do not hear from communities, they remain unaware of the problem and will not work to increase funding or support.

Increasing School Personnel Awareness and Sensitivity

District and school personnel, such as principals, secretaries, and pupil transportation directors, who interact directly with homeless students and who are frequently the "gatekeepers" for issues such as enrollment and transportation, must be sensitive to the needs of homeless children and youth and aware of their educational rights. The school district should provide ongoing staff development and support of efforts by school and district personnel to coordinate services for homeless children and youth. School personnel and district pupil transportation directors should attend state and national conferences related to homelessness and participate in local initiatives addressing the needs of homeless children and youth.

Conducting Research on Effective Programs

School district staff should research and compile information on other districts that have devised successful strategies for transporting homeless children and youth to assist the district in developing and improving its own strategies. Sources for this information include conferences on homelessness and pupil transportation, documents from the U.S. Department of Education, and information from the National Center for Homeless Education. School district personnel may also wish to meet with homeless liaisons and pupil transportation directors from other districts to examine their programs.

Symposium participants recommended examining ways special education programs have addressed transportation for special needs students. Many of the issues are the same as those for transporting homeless students, such as the need for district resources allocated for additional bus routes, vehicles, and personnel.

Implementing Standardized Regulations and Consistent Enforcement

All stakeholders should know about the McKinney Act, specifically as it relates to school of origin, enrollment, and transportation. In addition, school districts should be aware of any state legislation that supports educational services for homeless children and youth. Copies of the McKinney Act and state guidelines, available from state homeless education coordinators, should be readily accessible by all district and school personnel. Additionally, the educational rights of homeless children and youth should be posted in schools.

Consistent standardized rules and regulations across school districts, a homeless liaison in every district, and oversight of McKinney legislation by state and federal agencies are beneficial to school personnel working with homeless children and youth. It is helpful for school district homeless liaisons and pupil transportation coordinators to know that state or federal personnel will intervene on a student's behalf if necessary.

Seeking Multiple Funding Sources

School districts and communities should be aware of other funding options available to homeless students besides McKinney funding. Several representatives of the effective programs featured at the Symposium reported using funds from private organizations as well as pursuing creative avenues to obtain grant funding. Fundraising, held in conjunction with awareness activities, is a strategy used by some school districts. Establishing a foundation or a cooperative has worked for some districts as well.

Title I is a viable resource for serving homeless children and youth, including contributing funds toward transportation. School districts should set aside Title I funds for transportation. School districts should research creative entrepreneurial strategies used by other districts. Persistence and relationship building on the part of those seeking funds are keys to garnering resources.

Establishing a Communication and Collaboration System

Symposium participants stated that school districts, schools, shelters, and social services should communicate with one another and collaborate when possible to ensure that homeless students are getting to school and receiving the educational benefits that the McKinney legislation mandates. Having a system in place, such as a central point of contact for the coordination of services for homeless children and youth (including transportation to school and school activities), prevents time-consuming efforts for individuals trying to figure out what services are available for the students. District homeless liaisons and pupil transportation directors should communicate and meet regularly to discuss transportation needs of homeless children and youth and strategies for meeting these needs. School personnel, district administrators, superintendents, and school boards also must be kept in the loop.

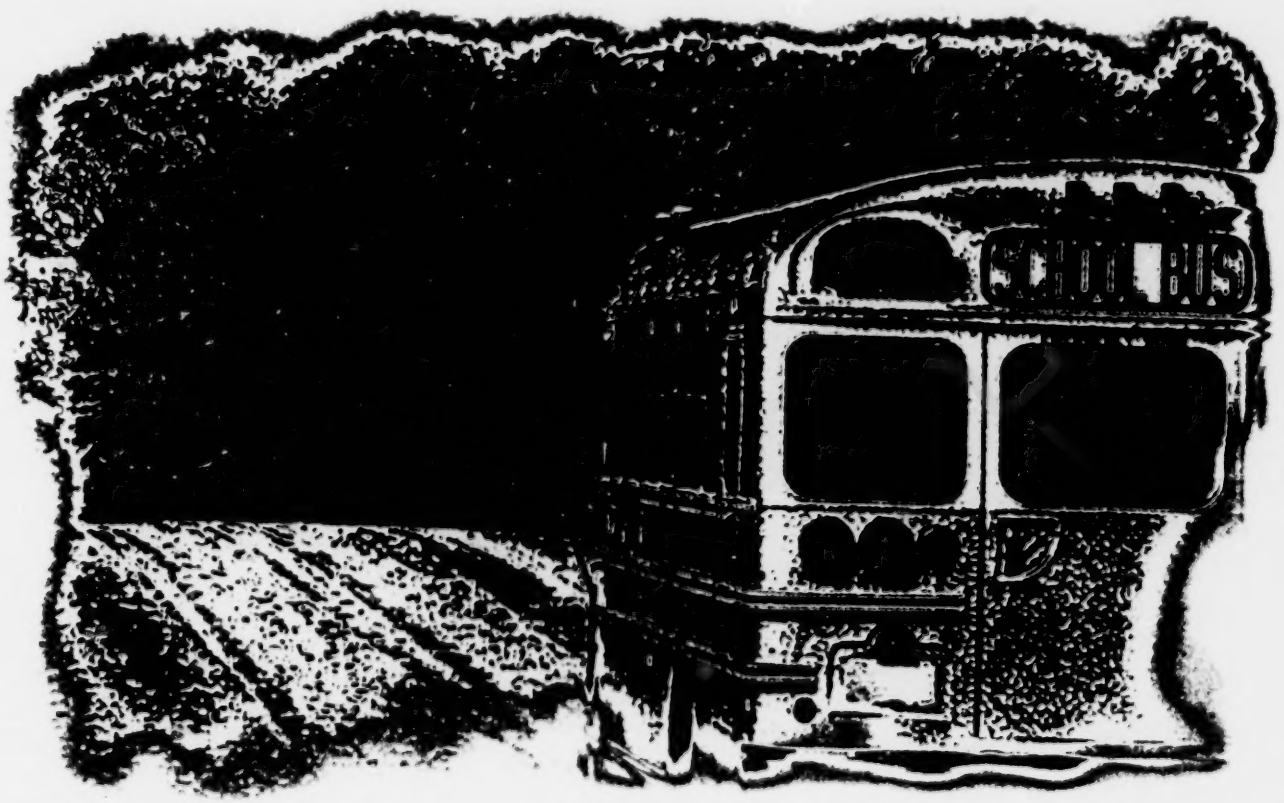
District homeless liaisons should look to the special education program both for resources that might be shared to provide transportation for homeless children and for strategies in leadership and advocacy that have resulted in strong policies and legislation for special education.

Homeless liaisons should also build a relationship with the Title I coordinator and discuss specific ways Title I funds could support the homeless education program. A collaborative approach is generally more effective than pointing to sections of the Title I legislation that cover homeless children. Title I coordinators need to feel ownership in the homeless education program.

Collecting Data

As a means of accountability for current transportation programs and in order to justify requests for additional funding, school districts should analyze the impact of school attendance on academic success. School districts must be able to support, with data, statements concerning why stability is good for children and youth who are homeless and why students should remain in their schools of origin whenever possible. Districts must demonstrate the effectiveness of their transportation programs and the impact transportation has had on students who are homeless.

District homeless liaisons and pupil transportation directors should keep detailed records on transporting homeless students: the number of students and locations to which and from which they are transported for school activities and for before- and after-school activities. The homeless liaisons should compile attendance and achievement data on homeless students, disaggregated for students who remain in their school of origin and for students who transfer from one school to another.



Support Needed from Local, State, and Federal Policymaking Levels

In order for a system of transportation for homeless children and youth to be institutionalized, schools and communities need both policy and legislative support from the federal, state, and local levels. Without these types of support, strategies are usually piecemeal and short-term, dependent largely on good intentions and charitable initiatives. Additionally, these strategies frequently fall victim to policies that are conflicting and confusing as they are interpreted by individual schools and districts.

The following is a list of policy and legislative activities needed to support schools and communities in their efforts to provide services, including transportation, to homeless children and youth.

Strengthening Federal and State Legislation

Stronger language and accountability for compliance would help ensure that school districts and communities share responsibility for getting homeless children and youth to school, helping them remain in their school of origin, and providing them access to before- and after-school activities. For example, legislation both on the federal and state level needs to clarify who is responsible for transporting homeless children and youth across districts when necessary.

Qualifying terms such as "when feasible" and "as necessary" must be clarified, and conditions must be clearly stated which would preclude providing services to homeless children.

Federal legislation must include stronger leadership roles for state coordinators in monitoring and compliance, in addition to their current role of assisting districts in addressing the needs of homeless children and youth. However, a too heavy-handed approach to compliance can create more resistance and less cooperation in school districts that are struggling to do the best they can.

Federal legislation should require that every school district appoint a homeless liaison. School districts that currently have homeless liaisons demonstrate the benefits of having a strong point of contact that coordinates services, including transportation, for homeless children and youth.

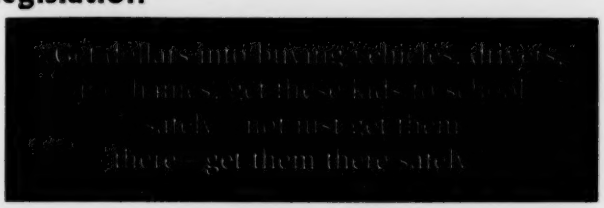
Increasing Accountability for McKinney Programs

Districts are given great flexibility to tailor McKinney funds to the needs of their homeless children and youth. In many cases, the programs lack strong evaluation components, and districts make their own interpretations of laws and regulations. As a result, many districts do not adequately address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth. As districts attempt to use their limited resources for homeless children and youth in the ways they perceive to be best, often many other needs are given preference over those involving transportation.

Many state coordinators issue state guidance that includes both McKinney legislation and state regulations. This guidance provides a uniform and standard way to administer the McKinney legislation across their state.

States should be required to collect specific data from the districts in order to report separately the ways each district is addressing the transportation needs of homeless children and youth in their federal reports.

Increasing Funding to Support Legislation



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A fundamental problem identified by the symposium participants is that the legislation requires that school districts remove barriers and provide services to support the educational achievement of homeless children and youth, yet the level of funding does not adequately cover the costs of the services they need. The services are critical for these children and youth; increased funding for services would enable districts to rise above the dilemma of choosing between compliance and fiscal issues.

One symposium participant proposed establishing discretionary funds at the federal level allocated specifically for addressing transportation needs of homeless children and youth. District allocations would be determined from information on equipment, personnel, and resources necessary to serve identified needs and numbers of homeless children and youth in the district.

Increasing Legislation and Policy Awareness

Many people in school systems and communities are unaware of features of legislative policies that affect homeless children and youth. For example, some districts do not utilize Title I Set Aside funds for homeless children and youth or do not realize that homeless children are automatically eligible for Title I services and, in fact, that Title I funds can be used for transporting homeless children. Also, localities need to be aware of special education regulations in IDEA that apply specifically to homeless children. Although funds for McKinney programs are limited, individuals arranging services for homeless children and youth should tap into other existing funding sources for which these students are eligible.

Educators, administrators, service providers, and school boards need to have opportunities to increase their awareness of laws and policies relating to homeless children and youth. Professional development events should take place at the local level. Also, presentations should be given at national conferences that include each of these role groups. Regarding transportation issues specifically, service providers need to attend and present at conferences and meetings involving pupil transportation directors and vice versa. In addition, a guidebook that compiles all existing federal laws addressing services for the transportation of homeless children and youth would provide a critical overview of legislative support for this issue.

In many states and school districts, conflicting laws and policies create barriers to serving homeless children and youth. States and districts should review policies regarding pupil transportation, in addition to those regarding attendance, guardianship, and immunization, to ensure policies are mutually reinforcing, not conflicting.

Supporting Collaboration

Ongoing contact between district liaisons and pupil transportation directors would ensure that each is aware of the other's needs and issues relating to providing transportation to homeless children and youth. In addition, greater connections between the homeless program and other federal programs, such as Title I, would ensure more efficient use of funds allocated for all at-risk students. Homeless children and youth benefit most in districts where administrators take the initiative to establish collaborative relationships. Unfortunately, in most districts, this collaboration does not occur. Symposium participants recommended policy support from the state education department and the superintendent to ensure that communication, coordination, and collaboration among departments and programs take place, suggesting that mechanisms for these activities be included in program proposals.

Symposium participants also recommended stronger connections among those serving homeless children and youth in school districts and local and state legislators and policymakers. Increasing awareness of the needs of homeless children and youth is the first step to ensuring that the issue is addressed at the policy and legislative levels.

Laying the Foundation: What Needs to Be Done

Symposium participants prioritized and discussed the four most critical areas they felt needed to be addressed to lay the foundation for meeting the transportation needs of homeless children and youth: creating awareness at all levels, establishing a greater connection to Title I, passing stronger and clearer legislation, and collecting data on the impact of transportation services for homeless children and youth.

Creating Awareness at All Levels

In order to make homelessness an issue on local, state, and federal agendas, school districts and communities should conduct ongoing awareness activities that include all levels of community members, educators, service providers, school staff (including teachers, administrators, and support personnel), district staff (including pupil transportation directors, Title I coordinators, student services personnel, and superintendents), school boards, public and private sector service providers, business representatives, charities, and legislators. Awareness activities should be conducted on the state and federal levels. A variety of activities including media coverage, newsletters, presentations, conferences, and inservice workshops could provide information on the McKinney legislation, the federal definition of homelessness, and the educational rights of homeless children and youth. These activities would create sensitivity to the challenges faced by homeless children, youth, and families. Participants recommended a national spokesperson, such as an entertainer or sports figure, to help create awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness.

Establishing Greater Connection between Programs for Homeless Children and Youth and Title I

Many school districts are not currently using Title I allocations for the transportation of homeless children and youth, even though federal guidelines allow for Title I funding to be used for this purpose. District pupil transportation directors and homeless liaisons need to attend Title I meetings and invite Title I personnel to district meetings addressing transportation and to conferences and workshops that address homelessness. District homeless liaisons need to meet with Title I coordinators to make them aware of the McKinney legislation and to discuss areas of collaboration between the homeless program and Title I, reinforcing the fact that getting homeless children and youth to programs and services is a critical first step. District homeless liaisons should plan to meet with the Title I coordinators when they are developing their LEA plan. Homeless liaisons should help the district review the extent to which homeless children and youth are receiving the same services as Title I students.

Support for ensuring that homeless children and youth are being served by Title I is needed from the state and federal levels as well. A guidebook from the U.S. Department of Education showing when Title I should address transportation issues and descriptions of allowable expenses (as well as a policy letter from the Department) would show commitment from the federal level to ensure that Title I funds are spent where needed on transportation for homeless students.

Passing Stronger and Clearer Legislation

Language in the proposed reauthorization of the McKinney Act includes an increase in annual

appropriations and provisions for a liaison in every district, immediate enrollment (even when disputes arise), and keeping a child or youth in his school of origin according to the parents' wishes. If the legislation passes, the McKinney Act will provide stronger support for the educational needs of homeless children and youth. In addition, proposed National Homeless Education Challenge Grants designed to bring focused attention to successful, replicable approaches in the areas of transportation, unaccompanied homeless youth, and homeless preschoolers would give school districts and communities practical guidance in developing their own strategies. Further legislative provisions (not currently proposed) should require public postings of the rights of homeless children and youth, including the right homeless students have to remain in their school of origin.

An ongoing need exists for constituents to inform their congressional representatives of the needs of homeless children and youth and encourage them to support stronger federal legislation. Grassroots activities such as letters, meetings, phone calls, media coverage, and the dissemination of legislative alerts to local groups and organizations are effective strategies to focus attention on homelessness and influence legislation. Persistence and relationship building are key components in these grassroots activities.

Greater coordination of existing legislation needs to take place at the local, state, and federal levels. District homeless liaisons, state homeless coordinators, and U.S. Department of Education staff need to review relevant policies and laws, identify areas of conflict, and make appropriate revisions.

Establishing a Tracking System for Program Evaluation and Impact Studies

Tracking and evaluative measures would show the impact of having reliable and continuous transportation to school and school-related activities on the academic achievement of homeless students. Collecting consistent data across districts and states requires that evaluation measures be uniform. A U.S. Department of Education-sponsored task force should be established to develop a protocol with input from state homeless education coordinators and district homeless liaisons. The task force would determine what kinds of data to collect (e.g., demographic information, attendance rates, school mobility, continued attendance in schools of origin, overall academic performance—grades and achievement on state assessments, services provided to homeless students—type, duration, and participation in support and enrichment activities). The data would also include qualitative descriptions of innovative programs. The U.S. Department of Education and state homeless education coordinators could oversee the tracking system and its related paperwork. After data are collected and reports generated, comparison studies should be made of districts with and without a transportation system for homeless students. Sharing the results of these studies would be invaluable.

What Can You Do?

District homeless liaisons can do the following:

- Become informed of mandates in the McKinney Act and of other state and local policies impacting homeless children and youth.
- Establish procedures and policies for arranging transportation for homeless children and youth.
- Establish yourself (or a designee) as the single point of contact for coordinating education services for homeless children and youth.
- Conduct awareness activities in the community.
- Conduct inservices for school personnel.
- Invite the district Title I coordinator, pupil transportation director, school administrators, and support personnel to attend conferences and meetings on homelessness.
- Research effective transportation strategies implemented in other districts.
- Establish regular communication with the pupil transportation director.
- Establish regular communication with shelters.
- Communicate needs of homeless children and youth to superintendents, the school board, and legislators.
- Seek multiple sources of funding.
- Communicate with the district Title I coordinator.
- Ensure that the educational rights of homeless children and youth are posted in school offices, shelters, and social services.
- Collect data on homeless students with regard specifically to transportation, tracking (how many students are transported, from where), to where, attendance, achievement, and number of school transfers, and then develop an annual report to share with all stakeholders.

School personnel can do the following:

- Become informed of the educational rights of homeless children and youth regarding school of origin, enrollment, and transportation.
- Treat homeless children, youth, and their families with sensitivity.
- Inform families of homeless children and youth of their rights and assure them that their transportation needs will be met; contact the district liaison to arrange transportation.

District pupil transportation directors can do the following:

- Become informed of the educational rights of homeless children and youth regarding transportation.
- Attend meetings and conferences that address issues relating to homelessness.
- Provide inservices to bus drivers to help them treat homeless children and youth with sensitivity and dignity and protect the confidentiality of their homelessness.
- Communicate regularly with the district homeless liaison.
- Be entrepreneurial and flexible in arranging transportation for homeless children and youth.

State homeless education coordinators can do the following:

- Provide support to school districts in enforcing the McKinney Act and state legislation relating to homeless children and youth.
- Work with the state director of pupil transportation services to eliminate conflicting policies and to develop policies and procedures that will assist districts in providing transportation for homeless children and youth; specifically, clarify

policies as to who pays when a homeless child is transported across districts to remain in his or her school of origin, and develop a guidebook that will be disseminated to all district homeless liaisons, pupil transportation coordinators, and superintendents.

- Communicate with the state Title I coordinator to encourage district Title I coordinators to allocate funds to serve homeless children and youth, especially in the area of transportation.
- Communicate with legislators.
- Require districts to track their services for the transportation of homeless children and youth; provide a consistent format across the state.
- Invite the state Title I coordinator and pupil transportation director to attend conferences and meetings on homelessness.

Homeless Education staff with the U.S. Department of Education can do the following:

- Strengthen the McKinney Act; strengthen the role of state coordinators in enforcing the McKinney Act.
- Develop a national-level tracking system that districts can use to collect consistent data across states on transportation services for homeless students.
- Require state coordinators to report annually the transportation services provided to homeless students in their state's districts.
- Establish stronger communication with other federal programs such as Title I and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Develop a guidebook that compiles all legislation addressing the transportation of homeless children and youth, and disseminate this legislation to all school districts.
- Compile a document on effective programs and strategies that districts use to provide transportation for homeless children and youth.
- Sponsor research studies and disseminate the results.

Members of national advocacy organizations addressing issues related to homelessness can do the following:

- Initiate a national awareness campaign on issues relating to the needs of homeless children and youth.
- Inform and seek support from legislators on a continual basis.
- Sponsor research studies (coordinated with those sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education) and disseminate the results.

Areas for Further Research

The National Symposium raised many issues related to the transportation of homeless children and youth. The following are identified areas for further research:

- Transportation for homeless children and youth in rural areas—areas with less than 5,000, 1,000, and 500 students. Researchers should contact the National Academy of Sciences Transportation Research Board for its research on rural transit systems, specifically for a study on rural areas that have merged their public and school transportation system. Researchers may also contact the National Academy of Sciences for supporting research on transportation.
- Developing a framework for effective district transportation programs that serve homeless children and youth. Researchers should examine what kind of infrastructure needs to be in place for districts to address challenging pupil transportation issues.
- Successful models. Many districts request a compilation of "successful programs/models" yet successful models vary greatly in what they do well. Researchers need to define success and identify measures of success to clearly delineate the effective features of transportation programs.
- State and district policies on mile limits for transportation and barriers they pose for homeless children and youth.
- Privatization of services. Researchers need to examine the benefits and the barriers related to transporting homeless children in a privatized system. Also, what is the level of awareness of homeless issues among these companies?
- Transportation for children staying at emergency and transitional shelters.
- Transportation for homeless preschool children.
- State legislation that supports the McKinney Act regarding the transportation of homeless children and youth.

Appendix A: Issue Brief

In February 2000, the National Center for Homeless Education convened a National Symposium on the Transportation of Homeless Children and Youth. Participants represented state departments of education, school districts, the homeless education research community, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, and national homeless advocacy organizations. Following is a brief overview of the discussions:

- Homeless students encounter problems gaining access to transportation services in three areas: (1) transportation to any school for those children and youth residing in shelters or other facilities not on regular bus routes, (2) transportation to the school of origin once they have moved, and (3) transportation to before- and after-school activities.
- Transportation rights are ensured for homeless children and youth through the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for those homeless students with special needs.
- The National Highway Safety Administration's Guideline #17 established minimum recommendations for the transportation of students to and from school and school-related activities. Service providers are urged to ensure that the transportation of homeless children and youth is equally as safe as transportation of all other students as regulated in the federal guidelines.
- Barriers to transportation for homeless children and youth include: lack of awareness of homeless children in school districts; confusion over policies and legislation; limited funding and resources; lack of communication among schools and shelters, homeless families and schools, schools and school district transportation directors, or between two school districts; and apathy.
- School districts that successfully address the transportation needs of homeless children and youth typically have several of the following features in place: an existing transportation system that incorporates transportation for homeless students—transporting homeless students is not an add-on; institutionalized support from administrators, decision makers, and policymakers; funding from several sources; a system of communication and collaboration; and committed staff.
- In order to address the transportation needs of homeless students, school districts and communities need to conduct the following activities: increase awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding homelessness on the part of both the community and school personnel, conduct research on effective programs, implement standardized regulations and consistent enforcement, seek multiple funding sources, implement a system of communication and collaboration, and collect data to show the impact of school attendance on the achievement of homeless students, particularly of those who remain in their school of origin.
- Support needed from local, state, and federal policymaking levels include strengthening federal and state legislation, increasing accountability for McKinney programs, increasing funding to support legislation, increasing awareness of legislation and policies, and supporting collaboration across programs, districts, and service providers.

- The four most critical areas identified by Symposium participants that need to be addressed to lay a foundation for addressing the transportation needs of homeless children and youth are (1) creating awareness of homelessness and homeless children and youth among all levels and role groups, (2) establishing greater connection between programs for homeless children and youth and Title I, (3) passing stronger and clearer legislation, and (4) establishing a tracking system for program evaluation and impact studies.

Appendix B: 1994 Stewart B. Mckinney Homeless Assistance act (Subtitle B of Title VII)

SEC. 323. EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

Subtitle B of title VII of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) is amended to read as follows:

"Subtitle B—Education for Homeless Children and Youth

"SEC. 721. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

"It is the policy of the Congress that—

"(1) each State educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth;

"(2) in any State that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the State's compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth, the State will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youth are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youth;

"(3) homelessness alone should not be sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment; and

"(4) homeless children and youth should have access to the education and other services that such children and youth need to ensure that such children and youth have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student performance standards to which all students are held.

"SEC. 722. GRANTS FOR STATE AND LOCAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

"(a) General Authority.—The Secretary is authorized to make grants to States in accordance with the provisions of this section to enable such States to carry out the activities described in subsections (d), (e), (f), and (g).

"(b) Application.—No State may receive a grant under this section unless the State educational agency submits an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing or accompanied by such information as the Secretary may reasonably require.

"(c) Allocation and Reservations.—

"(1) In general.—Subject to paragraph (2) and section 724(c), from the amounts appropriated for each fiscal year under section 726, the Secretary is authorized to allot to each State an amount that bears the same ratio to the amount appropriated for such year under section 726 as the amount allocated under section 1122 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to the State for that year bears to the total amount allocated under section 1122 to all States for that year, except that no State shall receive less than $100,000.

"(2) Reservation.—

"(A) The Secretary is authorized to reserve 0.1 percent of the amount appropriated for each fiscal year under section 726 to be allocated by the Secretary among the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau (until the effective date of the Compact

of Free Association with the Government of Palau), according to their respective need for assistance under this subtitle, as determined by the Secretary.

"(B)(i) The Secretary is authorized to transfer one percent of the amount appropriated for each fiscal year under section 726 to the Department of the Interior for programs for Indian students served by schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior, as determined under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, that are consistent with the purposes of this Act.

"(ii) The Secretary and the Secretary of the Interior shall enter into an agreement, consistent with the requirements of this part, for the distribution and use of the funds described in clause (i) under terms that the Secretary determines best meet the purposes of the programs described in such clause. Such agreement shall set forth the plans of the Secretary of the Interior for the use of the amounts transferred, including appropriate goals, objectives, and milestones.

"(3) Definition.—As used in this subsection, the term 'State' shall not include the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or Palau.

"(d) Activities.—Grants under this section shall be used—

"(1) to carry out the policies set forth in section 721 in the State;

"(2) to provide activities for, and services to, homeless children, including preschool-aged children, and homeless youth that enable such children and youth to enroll in, attend, and succeed in school, or, if appropriate, in preschool programs;

"(3) to establish or designate an Office of Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth in the State educational agency in accordance with subsection (f);

"(4) to prepare and carry out the State plan described in subsection (g); and

"(5) to develop and implement professional development programs for school personnel to heighten their awareness of, and capacity to respond to, specific problems in the education of homeless children and youth.

"(e) State and Local Grants.—

"(1) In general.—

"(A) Subject to subparagraph (B), if the amount allotted to the State educational agency for any fiscal year under this subtitle exceeds the amount such agency received for fiscal year 1990 under this subtitle, such agency shall provide grants to local educational agencies for purposes of section 723.

"(B) The State educational agency may reserve not more than the greater of 5 percent of the amount such agency receives under this subtitle for any fiscal year, or the amount such agency received under this subtitle for fiscal year 1990, to conduct activities under subsection (f) directly or through grants or contracts.

"(2) Special rule.—If the amount allotted to a State educational agency for any fiscal year under this subtitle is less than the amount such agency received for fiscal year 1990 under this subtitle, such agency, at such agency's discretion, may provide grants to local educational agencies in accordance with section 723 or may conduct activities under subsection

(f) directly or through grants or contracts.

"(f) Functions of the Office of Coordinator.—The Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth established in each State shall—

"(1) estimate the number of homeless children and youth in the State and the number of such children and youth served with assistance provided under the grants or contracts under this subtitle;

"(2) gather, to the extent possible, reliable, valid, and comprehensive information on the nature and extent of the problems homeless children and youth have in gaining access to public preschool programs and to public elementary and secondary schools, the difficulties in identifying the special needs of such children and youth, any progress made by the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State in addressing such problems and difficulties, and the success of the program under this subtitle in allowing homeless children and youth to enroll in, attend, and succeed in, school;

"(3) develop and carry out the State plan described in subsection (g);

"(4) prepare and submit to the Secretary not later than October 1, 1997, and on October 1 of every third year thereafter, a report on the information gathered pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) and such additional information as the Secretary may require to carry out the Secretary's responsibilities under this subtitle;

"(5) facilitate coordination between the State educational agency, the State social services agency, and other agencies providing services to homeless children and youth, including homeless children and youth who are preschool age, and families of such children and youth; and

"(6) develop relationships and coordinate with other relevant education, child development, or preschool programs and providers of services to homeless children, homeless families, and runaway and homeless youth (including domestic violence agencies, shelter operators, transitional housing facilities, runaway and homeless youth centers, and transitional living programs for homeless youth), to improve the provision of comprehensive services to homeless children and youth and their families.

"(g) State Plan.—

"(1) In general.—Each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan to provide for the education of homeless children and youth within the State, which plan shall describe how such children and youth are or will be given the opportunity to meet the same challenging State student performance standards all students are expected to meet, shall describe the procedures the State educational agency will use to identify such children and youth in the State and to assess their special needs, and shall—

"(A) describe procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youth;

"(B) describe programs for school personnel (including principals, attendance officers, teachers and enrollment personnel), to heighten the awareness of such personnel of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth;

"(C) describe procedures that ensure that homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria are able to participate in Federal, State, or local food programs;

"(D) describe procedures that ensure that—

"(i) homeless children have equal access to the same public preschool programs, administered by the State agency, as provided to other children; and

"(ii) homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria are able to participate in Federal, State, or local before- and after-school care programs;

"(E) address problems set forth in the report provided to the Secretary under subsection (f)(4);

"(F) address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youth, including problems caused by—

"(i) transportation issues; and

"(ii) enrollment delays that are caused by—

"(I) immunization requirements;

"(II) residency requirements;

"(III) lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation; or

"(IV) guardianship issues;

"(G) demonstrate that the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State have developed, and will review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State; and

"(H) contain an assurance that the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State will adopt policies and practices to ensure that homeless children and youth are not isolated or stigmatized.

"(2) Compliance.—Each plan adopted under this subsection shall also show how the State will ensure that local educational agencies in the State will comply with the requirements of paragraphs (3) through (9).

"(3) Local educational agency requirements.—

"(A) The local educational agency of each homeless child and youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall, according to the child's or youth's best interest, either—

"(i) continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin—

"(I) for the remainder of the academic year; or

"(II) in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years, for the following academic year; or

"(ii) enroll the child or youth in any school that nonhomeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

"(B) In determining the best interests of the child or youth under subparagraph (A), the local educational agency shall comply, to the extent feasible, with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection.

"(C) For purposes of this paragraph, the term 'school of origin' means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

"(D) The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents.

"(4) Comparable services.—Each homeless child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected according to the provisions of paragraph (3), including—

"(A) transportation services;

"(B) educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or similar State or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited-English proficiency;

"(C) programs in vocational education;

"(D) programs for gifted and talented students; and

"(E) school meals programs.

"(5) Records.—Any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, of each homeless child or youth shall be maintained—

"(A) so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school district; and

"(B) in a manner consistent with section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act.

"(6) Coordination.—Each local educational agency serving homeless children and youth that receives assistance under this subtitle shall coordinate with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to such children or youth and their families, including services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

"(7) Liaison.—

"(A) Each local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall designate a homelessness liaison to ensure that—

"(i) homeless children and youth enroll and succeed in the schools of that agency; and

"(ii) homeless families, children, and youth receive educational services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.

"(B) State coordinators and local educational agencies shall inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the liaisons.

"(8) Review and revisions.—Each State educational agency and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall review and

revise any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth in schools selected in accordance with paragraph (3). In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records, and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youth who are not currently attending school.

"(9) Coordination.—Where applicable, each State and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall coordinate with State and local housing agencies responsible for developing the comprehensive housing affordability strategy described in section 105 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act to minimize educational disruption for children who become homeless.

"SEC. 723. LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY GRANTS FOR THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

"(a) General Authority.—

"(1) In general.—The State educational agency shall, in accordance with section 722(e) and from amounts made available to such agency under section 726, make grants to local educational agencies for the purpose of facilitating the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth.

"(2) Services.—Unless otherwise specified, services under paragraph (1) may be provided through programs on school grounds or at other facilities. Where such services are provided through programs to homeless students on school grounds, schools may provide services to other children and youth who are determined by the local educational agency to be at risk of failing in, or dropping out of, schools, in the same setting or classroom. To the maximum extent practicable, such services shall be provided through existing programs and mechanisms that integrate homeless individuals with nonhomeless individuals.

"(3) Requirement.—Services provided under this section shall not replace the regular academic program and shall be designed to expand upon or improve services provided as part of the school's regular academic program.

"(b) Application.—A local educational agency that desires to receive a grant under this section shall submit an application to the State educational agency at such time, in such manner, and containing or accompanied by such information as the State educational agency may reasonably require according to guidelines issued by the Secretary. Each such application shall include—

"(1) a description of the services and programs for which assistance is sought and the problems to be addressed through the provision of such services and programs;

"(2) an assurance that the local educational agency's combined fiscal effort per student or the aggregate expenditures of that agency and the State with respect to the provision of free public education by such agency for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the determination is made was not less than 90 percent of such combined fiscal effort or aggregate expenditures for the second fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the determination is made;

"(3) an assurance that the applicant complies with, or will use requested funds to come into compliance with, paragraphs (3) through (9) of section 722(g); and

"(4) a description of policies and procedures that the agency will implement to ensure that activities carried out by the agency will not isolate or stigmatize homeless children and youth.

"(c) Awards.—

"(1) In general.—The State educational agency shall, in accordance with section 722(g) and from amounts made available to such agency under section 726, award grants under this section to local educational agencies submitting an application under subsection (b) on the basis of the need of such agencies.

"(2) Need.—In determining need under paragraph (1), the State educational agency may consider the number of homeless children and youth enrolled in

preschool, elementary, and secondary schools within the area served by the agency, and shall consider the needs of such children and youth and the ability of the agency to meet such needs. Such agency may also consider—

"(A) the extent to which the proposed use of funds would facilitate the enrollment, retention, and educational success of homeless children and youth;

"(B) the extent to which the application reflects coordination with other local and State agencies that serve homeless children and youth, as well as the State plan required by section 722(g);

"(C) the extent to which the applicant exhibits in the application and in current practice a commitment to education for all homeless children and youth; and

"(D) such other criteria as the agency determines appropriate.

"(3) Duration of grants.—Grants awarded under this section shall be for terms not to exceed three years.

"(d) Authorized Activities.—A local educational agency may use funds awarded under this section for activities to carry out the purpose of this subtitle, including—

"(1) the provision of tutoring, supplemental instruction, and enriched educational services that are linked to the achievement of the same challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards the State establishes for other children or youth;

"(2) the provision of expedited evaluations of the strengths and needs of homeless children and youth, including needs and eligibility for programs and services (such as educational programs for gifted and talented students, children with disabilities, and students with limited-English proficiency, services provided under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or similar State or local programs, programs in vocational education, and school meals programs);

"(3) professional development and other activities for educators and pupil services personnel that are designed to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of such personnel to the needs of homeless children and youth, the rights of such children and youth under this Act, and the specific educational needs of runaway and homeless youth;

"(4) the provision of referral services to homeless children and youth for medical, dental, mental, and other health services;

"(5) the provision of assistance to defray the excess cost of transportation for students pursuant to section 722(g)(4), not otherwise provided through Federal, State, or local funding, where necessary to enable students to attend the school selected under section 722(g)(3);

"(6) the provision of developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs, not otherwise provided through Federal, State, or local funding, for preschool-aged children;

"(7) the provision of before- and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs for homeless children and youth in which a teacher or other qualified individual provides tutoring, homework assistance, and supervision of educational activities;

"(8) where necessary, the payment of fees and other costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records necessary to enroll homeless children and youth in school, including birth certificates, immunization records, academic records, guardianship records, and evaluations for special programs or services;

"(9) the provision of education and training to the parents of homeless children and youth about the rights of, and resources available to, such children and youth;

"(10) the development of coordination between schools and agencies providing services to homeless children and youth, including programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act;

"(11) the provision of pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services;

"(12) activities to address the particular needs of homeless children and youth that may arise from domestic violence;

"(13) the adaptation of space and purchase of supplies for nonschool facilities made available under subsection (a)(2) to provide services under this subsection;

"(14) the provision of school supplies, including those supplies to be distributed at shelters or temporary housing facilities, or other appropriate locations; and

"(15) the provision of other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youth to attend school.

"SEC. 724. SECRETARIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

"(a) Review of Plans.—In reviewing the State plans submitted by the State educational agencies under section 722(g), the Secretary shall use a peer review process and shall evaluate whether State laws, policies, and practices described in such plans adequately address the problems of homeless children and youth relating to access to education and placement as described in such plans.

"(b) Technical Assistance.—The Secretary shall provide support and technical assistance to the State educational agencies to assist such agencies to carry out their responsibilities under this subtitle.

"(c) Evaluation and Dissemination.—The Secretary shall conduct evaluation and dissemination activities of programs designed to meet the educational needs of homeless elementary and secondary school students, and may use funds appropriated under section 726 to conduct such activities.

"(d) Submission and Distribution.—The Secretary shall require applications for grants under this subtitle to be submitted to the Secretary not later than the expiration of the 60-day period beginning on the date that funds are available for purposes of making such grants and shall make such grants not later than the expiration of the 120-day period beginning on such date.

"(e) Determination by Secretary.—The Secretary, based on the information received from the States and information gathered by the Secretary under subsection (d), shall determine the extent to which State educational agencies are ensuring that each homeless child and homeless youth has access to a free appropriate public education as described in section 721(1).

"(f) Reports.—The Secretary shall prepare and submit a report to the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Labor and Human Resources of the Senate on the programs and activities authorized by this subtitle by December 31, 1997, and every third year thereafter.

"SEC. 725. DEFINITIONS.

"For the purpose of this subtitle, unless otherwise stated—

"(1) the term 'Secretary' means the Secretary of Education; and

"(2) the term 'State' means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

"SEC. 726. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

"For the purpose of carrying out this subtitle, there are authorized to be appropriated $30,000,000 for fiscal year 1995 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999."

Appendix C: Federal Definition of Homeless Children and Youth and the U.S. Department of Education's 1995 Preliminary Guidance

The U.S. Department of Education offers the following categories of children and youth who should be considered homeless under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act:

- Children and youth in transitional shelters
- Children and youth living in trailer parks and camp grounds because they lack adequate living accommodations
- Doubled-up children and youth, if they are doubled-up because of a loss of housing or other similar situation
- Children of migratory families, to the extent that they are staying in accommodations not fit for habitation
- Children and youth who have run away from home and are living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, the streets, or other inadequate accommodations
- School-age unwed mothers and expectant mothers living in homes for unwed mothers (if they have no other available living accommodations)
- Sick or abandoned children and youth who remain in a hospital beyond the time that they would normally stay for health reasons because they have been abandoned by their families
- Throwaway children and youth (that is, those whose parents or guardians will not permit them to live at home) if they live on the streets, in shelters, or in other transitional or inadequate accommodations

— from the U.S. Department of Education 1995 Preliminary Guidance for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program, Title VII, Subtitle B

For educational purposes, the definition of a homeless child or youth provided in the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77) and amended by P.L. 101-645 and P.L. 103-382 prevails.

A child or youth is considered to be homeless if he/she lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or has a primary nighttime residence that is (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

—from the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

Appendix D:
National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth Agenda

February 20-21, 2000-Williamsburg, Virginia

Purposes: (1) To identify what school districts and communities need to know and to be able to do in order to address the transportation needs of homeless children and (2) to identify policy and legislative issues that need to be addressed on the local, state, and federal levels.

Activities: (1) Raise issues and analyze them, (2) identify areas for further discussion and research, (3) make recommendations for schools districts and communities to address the issues of transportation, and (4) make recommendations for policymakers and legislators.

Sunday, February 20

(Focus on Questions 1 and 2)

2:00 p.m.	Overview and introductions
2:45	Overview of the transportation issue (Barbara Duffield)
3:00	Overview of school safety issues and federal regulations (Charles Gauthier)
3:45	Questions, answers, comments
4:00	Break
4:15	Discussion and small group activities—Identify and analyze barriers
5:30	Reports from selected districts
6:00	Dinner
7:00	Reports from selected districts (continued)
7:45	Discussion and small group activities—Identify features of successful programs
8:00	Report out
8:30	Wrap-up—Review the day
8:45	Adjourn

Monday, February 21

(Focus on Questions 3, 4, and 5)

8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	Overview of the day; discussion of additional issues raised
10:00	Break
10:15	Discussion and small group activities: 1. What do school districts and communities need to know and do? 2. What needs to take place in the policy and legislative arenas?
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00	Discussion—Further issues to emerge
1:30	Discussion—Recommendations
2:30	Wrap-up
3:00	Adjourn

Appendix E: National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth Participant List

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About the SERVE Organization

SERVE, directed by Dr. John R. Sanders, is an education organization with the mission to promote and support the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. The organization's commitment to continuous improvement is manifest in a cycle that begins with research and best practice. Building on theory and craft knowledge, SERVE staff develop tools and processes designed to assist practitioners, to refine the organization's delivery of technical assistance to schools and educational agencies, and, ultimately, to raise the level of student achievement in the region. Evaluation of the impact of these activities combined with input from affected stakeholders expands SERVE's knowledge base and directs future research.

This critical research-to-practice cycle is supported by an experienced staff strategically located throughout the region. This staff is highly skilled in providing needs-assessment services, conducting applied research in schools, and developing processes, products, and programs that inform educators and increase student achievement. In the last three years, SERVE staff has provided technical assistance and training to more than 18,000 teachers and administrators across the region and partnered with over 170 southeastern schools on research and development projects.

SERVE is governed by a board of directors that includes the governors, chief state school officers, educators, legislators, and private sector leaders from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

At SERVE's core is the Regional Educational Laboratory program. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, SERVE is one of ten organizations providing services of the Regional Educational Laboratory program to all 50 states and territories. These Laboratories form a knowledge network, building a bank of information and resources shared nationally and disseminated regionally to improve student achievement locally. Besides the Lab, SERVE is the lead agency in the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortium for the Southeast and the Southeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium. SERVE also administers a subcontract for the Region IV Comprehensive Center and has additional funding from the Department to provide services in migrant education and to operate the National Center for Homeless Education.

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This proceedings document from the National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth features legislation addressing the transportation needs of homeless children and youth, descriptions of school district programs that address the needs, and strategies for addressing the needs at local, state, and federal levels. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) produced this document as one of its ongoing efforts to provide resources for educators, shelter providers, parents, community agencies, policymakers, and all other stakeholders to understand the complex issues surrounding homelessness. Resources from the NCHE may be accessed in the following ways:

HelpLine: (800) 308-2145
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The National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE
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